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ABSTRACT

Iowa's education system is preparing for the 21st century by building on its past and present strengths. This report outlines the strategic plan established by the Iowa State Board of Education and the Iowa Department of Education. The plan establishes four interrelated goals for education in Iowa. Part 1 establishes an overall goal for Iowa's education system--improved student learning, achievement, and performance. It also describes the changing economic, social, and technological conditions that create the need for continuous improvement in the education system. Part 2 establishes three goals for the State Board and the Department of Education that support the overall system goal. The second part also identifies the specific strategies by which the State Board and the Department should work to achieve the three goals. Part 3 describes the various indicators that will measure the progress being made in attaining the goals. (LMI)

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Education

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Iowa's Future

The State Plan for Educational Excellence in the 21st Century

Revised December 1996

State Board of Education
Iowa Department of Education

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Education is Iowa's Future

The State Plan for Educational Excellence in the 21st Century

Revised December 1996

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Introduction

Iowa has reached a milestone in its history—150 years of statehood. Even before statehood, however, far-thinking early residents recognized the importance of education to their future and built Iowa's first schoolhouse in Lee County in 1830. Ever since, Iowa's education system has been a major force in the development of the state.

As Iowans built the social, governmental and economic systems of the state, they also built a border-to-border system of public and private elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, private colleges and universities and state universities. This education system, by producing a highly literate population, a skilled workforce and involved citizens, has played a vital role in creating the quality of life that Iowans enjoy today.

While Iowa looks backward and celebrates its past, however, it is also looking forward and planning for the future. It is preparing for the 21st century by building on the solid foundation of its social, governmental and economic strengths. Iowa's education system is also preparing for the 21st century by building on its past and present strengths.

Iowa's education system is also preparing for the 21st century by building on its past and present strengths.

The State Board of Education and the Department of Education have significant roles in this process. The State Board's role is to provide leadership and coordination for the education system, from early childhood through community college and for teacher education programs. The Board also works collaboratively with the Regents universities, the independent colleges and the workforce development system. Establishing goals for the system is a major way it fulfills these roles. In partnership with the State Board, the Department's role is to work to achieve these goals. The goals are the focus of the Board's policy making and they determine the direction of the Department's work, its budget request and its legislative priorities.

This edition of the strategic plan establishes four challenging and interrelated goals for education in Iowa. The plan is in three parts:

Part I establishes an overall goal for Iowa's education system: improved student learning, achievement and performance. It also describes the changing economic, social and technological conditions that create the need for continuous improvement in the education system.

Part II establishes three goals for the State Board and the Department of Education that support the overall system goal. This part of the plan also identifies the specific strategies by which the State Board and the Department will work to achieve these three goals, and, as a result, the overall system goal of improved student learning, achievement and performance.

Part III describes the various indicators that will measure the progress being made in attaining the goals.

This strategic plan sets an ambitious agenda for Iowa's education system and all its components—local schools and school districts, the area education agencies, the community colleges, higher education, parents, communities, business, industry, labor, and state and federal agencies. While it is ambitious, this agenda is also achievable.

Throughout the history of this state, Iowans have worked together to create stronger families, better communities and a brighter future for themselves and their state. By working together and building on that tradition, Iowans can create a seamless education system that maximizes the potential of every student and makes lifelong learning opportunities available to all Iowans. Iowans can create an educational system that meets the needs of the state and its citizens well into the 21st century.

Principles to Guide Educational Improvement in Iowa

1. All of Iowa's students must become responsible and productive citizens in an increasingly interdependent world.

2. Every level of Iowa's educational system, from early childhood through community college, must be committed to enabling all students to reach their full potential; this includes creating opportunities for our youth and adults to prepare for success in work or further education.

3. Higher expectations for all students must emphasize academics and the application of that knowledge and those abilities in problem solving, decision making and workplace readiness.

4. Schools, school districts, community colleges and area education agencies must be guided by a shared vision reached with the informed involvement of students, educators, parents and families, business, labor and other community members.

5. Schools, community colleges and area education agencies must be lifelong learning communities where educational staff have

been provided quality preparation, effective and relevant professional development and opportunities for participation in school decision making.

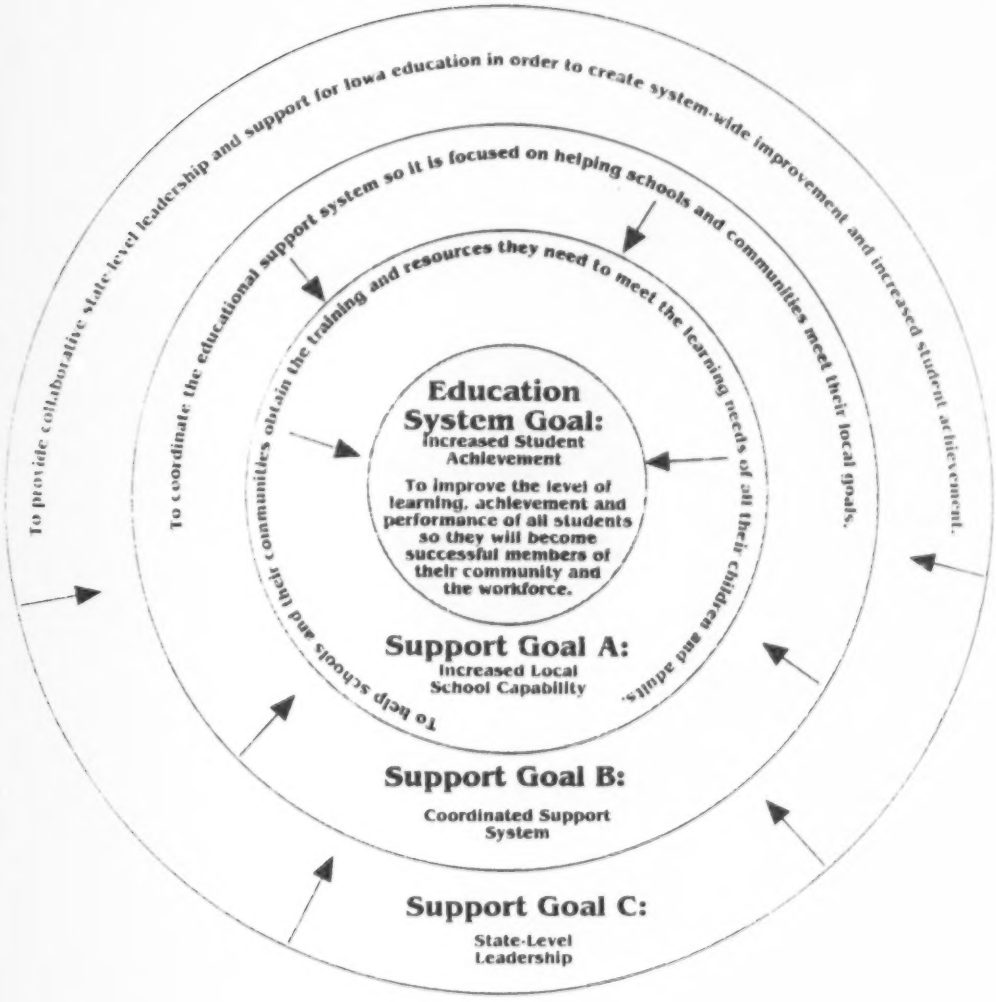
6. Parents and families must be active partners in the education of their children.

7. Local schools, school districts and community colleges have the primary responsibility for student achievement. They must be free to use a variety of locally determined methods for helping all students achieve at high levels and for effectively assessing the extent to which all students demonstrate achievement. Adequate information must be gathered to assess achievement by race, gender and socio-economic status.

8. The role of the state is to ensure that the basic educational welfare of all students is protected, to provide support to schools, school districts and community colleges in their efforts to improve student achievement and to report on system-wide student achievement.

9. All students in Iowa school districts and community colleges must have equal opportunity to participate in school programs and activities regardless of race, religion, national origin, sex or disability. Racism and harassment, which reduce learning and achievement, must be eliminated, and respect for all students must be fostered.

10. Education is part of the community support system for children and families and as such must collaborate effectively with the other parts of that system.


To provide collaborative state-level leadership and support for Iowa education in order to create system-wide improvement and increased student achievement.
To coordinate the educational support system so it is focused on helping schools and communities meet their local goals.
To help schools and their communities obtain the training and resources they need to meet the learning needs of all their children and adults.
Education System Goal:
Increased Student Achievement
To improve the level of learning, achievement and performance of all students so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce.
Support Goal A:
Increased Local School Capability
Support Goal B:
Coordinated Support System
Support Goal C:
State-Level Leadership

Mission: Our mission is to champion excellence in education through superior leadership and service. We are committed to helping schools and their communities meet the learning needs of all their students. Through education we strive to build a quality of life that sets the standard for the nation.

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Part I - Education System Goal

EDUCATION SYSTEM GOAL: TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF LEARNING, ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF ALL STUDENTS SO THEY WILL BECOME SUCCESSFUL MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND THE WORKFORCE.

Iowa's future is in Iowa's classrooms today. Iowa's students will be the parents, workers, employers, citizens, community leaders and policymakers of the 21st century. The quality of life they will be able to create for themselves, their families, their communities and their state depends on the quality of the education they receive now.

Iowa has a history of educational excellence. A literate population, strong community and political support, an equitable financing system, an established system of educational service agencies, an excellent community college system and a dedicated, skilled workforce have been essential elements of that success. These assets form a solid foundation on which educational excellence in the 21st century can be built. Accomplishing even higher levels of educational achievement, however, will be a greater challenge than ever before. The accelerating rate of change poses profound challenges for Iowa's education system. It must continuously improve, and at a faster rate than ever, to fulfill its ultimate responsibility of helping every student create a viable path to academic, personal and economic success in this changing environment.

Economic, technological and social change, in particular, will continue to impact the education system. The scope of economic change is most evident in the workplace. Numerous studies of the U.S. labor market indicate that only about 25 percent of occupations require a four-year college degree. Less than 20 percent require only a high school education. The majority require vocational-technical education after high school graduation and continuous training and retraining as the needs of the workplace change. Currently there is a serious mismatch between these facts of economic life and students' career aspirations. Too many students and their families still see a four-year college degree as the only path to success. And too many other students do not know that the time is past when they could go directly from high school to a high-paying, low-skill job. Global competition and technology have dramatically changed the workplace and the skills and knowledge workers need. The transition from the schoolhouse to the workplace is crucial. By working together, the elementary and secondary schools, which provide basic education, and the community colleges, which provide additional training, retraining and specialized education, can help students make smooth transitions between education and employment at various stages in their careers.

Technological change is evident everywhere — from video games on personal computers to supermarket scanners to robotics manufactur-

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ing. New technologies are revolutionizing access to information and, as a result, the teaching and learning process. In the 21st century, technology will be an even more important tool than it is now. Iowa's students will need the ability to use it in the workplace and to adapt to the changes it causes there. Technology has created an explosion of data and information, and Iowa's students will need the ability to use technology to access and use this growing resource. Both in the workplace and outside of it, this skill will increase in importance as a skill for a successful life.

Students do not learn in a vacuum and schools and community colleges do not operate in one. Both are part of a larger society that has changed significantly and will continue to do so. Changing social conditions have resulted in a growing number of students who are at risk of school failure because of poverty, poor health, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and other factors. Social and economic conditions are negatively affecting many families and the amount of guidance and support for learning they are able to provide. Adult learners, too, present special challenges to the education system. Displaced homemakers, adults lacking the basic academic and workplace skills and workers needing retraining are just a few of the adults affected by changing social and economic conditions. They come to the education system believing that their path to success begins with increased knowledge and skills.

Despite the challenges of rapid, economic, technological and social change, the needs of students have not changed. All students need an excellent basic education that challenges them to achieve their full academic, social and career potential. All students need to identify their interests and abilities and prepare realistically for the future. They need the skills required by the changing workplace. And they need to become lifelong learners to be successful in all aspects of their lives.

Part II - Goals and Strategies to Support the Education System Goal

The State Board and the Department of Education have adopted three interrelated goals that support the overall goal of increased student achievement. These support goals include helping local schools obtain the skills and resources they need to increase student achievement, coordinating the educational support available to local schools and providing state-level leadership.

Support Goal A: To help schools and their communities obtain the training and resources they need to meet the learning needs of all their children and adults.

Education happens locally. Iowa's schools and community colleges and the communities and families they serve have the primary responsibility for student learning and achievement. Improving schools' ability to meet that responsibility will strengthen the system where it has the most direct and most significant impact on student achievement. Improvement in school/community planning, collaboration and support, and resources are priorities.

School/community planning is an effective process to determine student needs. Through this process the school, parents, community members and representatives of business, industry and labor develop high learning expectations for their students. The next step is cooperatively developing and implementing a plan to help achieve those expectations. Assessing student progress using a variety of age-appropriate methods and reporting the results to the community complete the process. The ability to use a variety of assessment methods and to subsequently use the resulting information to strengthen the curriculum and teaching methods is a particular need at the local level, as is the meaningful reporting of the information to the community.

Truly effective school/community planning takes place only within a broad system of collaboration and support among the school, the family and the larger community. The family is the school's most important partner, and family involvement in the educational process, beginning with early childhood education, is essential to student learning and achievement. Since the community is a primary beneficiary of student learning and achievement, it must help the school do its work. This will happen when the distinctions between school and community are blurred and when the school reaches out to organizations and agencies that share its goals.

Partnerships with health, human service and juvenile justice organizations and agencies, for example, can help to address the changing social and economic conditions that are negatively affecting students and their families and can result in healthier students, stronger families and safer environments, both in and out of school. Partnerships between high schools and community colleges can strengthen the high school curriculum and provide additional opportunities to students. Partnerships with the area education agencies can provide better support and more efficient utilization of resources. Partnerships with the business, industry and labor segments of the community enable schools and community colleges to identify and teach essential work skills and contribute directly to economic growth and vitality. Collaborative efforts with other parts of the educational system, such as regional consortia and partnerships with higher education, can increase efficiency, effectiveness and resources.

Adequate resources are vital. Of these, Iowa's educational workforce is the most significant. Educators need more skills than ever before—skills to meet an increasingly wide range of student needs, to use technology such as the Iowa Communications Network to improve teach-

ing and learning and to design and implement new curricula that include high-level applied skills in academic subjects and in technology. Proficiency in these and other skills requires the highest quality educator preparation programs and ongoing professional development for practicing educators. Educational leaders make things happen. Opportunities and incentives for leadership development can strengthen this vital local resource. Special programs are needed to increase diversity throughout the educational workforce.

Strategies and Activities

Strategy 1. The State Board and the Department will support school improvement by assisting local communities with school/community planning, school improvement plan implementation and evaluation of progress toward attaining locally established student achievement goals.

The Department of Education will assist school districts and their communities to meet the learning needs of all their students and citizens by implementing a statewide support system for school/community planning with tools and information that support local efforts; by supporting local school improvement plan implementation with optional models, training and technology that schools and teachers can use to improve teaching and learning experiences for students; and by providing model processes schools might use to evaluate progress toward meeting local student achievement goals and report back to their communities.

Activities to implement the three parts of this strategy:

a. School/Community Planning

- The Department is working with area education agencies to form AEA/DE school improvement teams. These teams will provide assistance to local school districts in school and community planning processes. Different components of the planning process such as parental involvement in educational planning, establishing connections between the local school and the business community and integrating academic and vocational curriculum will be addressed.

- To help communities with their local planning efforts, the Department will provide information about changing demographics and current workplace competency requirements and trends.

- Opportunities for districts to share ideas will be provided through networking and conferences such as

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the Institute for Connecting School Improvement, a series of seminars designed to engage local district and AEA teams in establishing shared direction, gathering data and reporting progress.

- State Board members will emphasize school improvement as a key theme in the communication plan that is part of their leadership and advocacy agenda.

- The State Board and the Department will facilitate linkages between community colleges, AEAs and local school districts in order to strengthen articulation, build partnerships with business, industry and labor and connect schools with resources available through regional workforce development centers.

b. School Improvement Plan Implementation

- In order to assist local school districts implementing the plans they have developed with their communities, the Department, in collaboration with area education agencies, has established a Design Team to support curriculum, instruction, assessment and instructional technology efforts in the areas of mathematics, science, communication skills and applied learning. This Design Team will identify examples of best practices and exemplary programs for local districts to use in their own school improvement efforts. These models and best practices will be inclusive in nature and reflect multicultural, gender-fair approaches.

- In addition to the academic needs of students, Iowa educators must have the knowledge and skills to meet the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students and young children. To that end the Department will work with AEAs and local school districts on implementation of the Iowa Behavioral Initiative, a program that provides educators with training in effective practices to deal with these social, emotional and behavioral needs. This program is based on the belief that improving the learning environment in Iowa's schools will result in increased student achievement.

- To ensure that school improvement efforts benefit all students regardless of their socio-economic status, racial/ethnic background, ability or gender, equity and inclusion will be reflected throughout the school improvement process.

- The use of newer technology-based teaching and learning tools can help students achieve at higher levels by accommodating their individual learning styles, promoting independent, self-directed learning and providing immediate access to information resources throughout the world. The Department will develop networks to provide support, information, opportunity and facilitation for schools and community colleges to adapt technology approaches to meet their local needs.

- To ensure that all students have the opportunity for successful transition from school to career, Iowa's school-to-work and tech prep initiatives will be integrated with school improvement.

c. Evaluating and Reporting

- Information about models, best practices, research and resources in the areas of student assessment and reporting progress will be identified and disseminated through the Design Team and the AEA/DE school improvement teams. Student progress data will be reported by gender, race/ethnicity and, where possible, by socio-economic status.

- The Department is participating in a number of assessment projects designed to assist districts evaluate student progress. The New Standards Project is a partnership of 17 states and six urban school districts building an assessment system to measure student progress. Through the New Standards Project, the Department provides staff development, leadership training, performance assessment development and portfolio development for Iowa schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, a project of the National Center for Education Statistics, is the nation's only ongoing assessment of student achievement. Test items are written around a framework prepared for each content area, such as reading, writing, mathematics and science. ACT Work Keys is a nation-wide system to measure workplace skills, relate those skills to specific jobs and help individuals acquire the skills needed for the jobs they want. The State Board advocates funding to support ongoing participation in these programs and is exploring additional options for assessing student achievement and collecting student data.

- The State Board is working with the National Association of State Boards of Education in the areas of

evaluation and assessment, including the Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform and the State Education Improvement Partnership.

- Staff from the Iowa Testing Programs, which administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED), are helping the Department address the assessment issues associated with implementing the new Title I legislation. In addition, the Iowa Testing Programs is developing new ways of reporting results from ITBS and ITED that will make the results more useful to schools, districts and the Department.

Strategy 2. The State Board and the Department of Education will strengthen the role that education plays in developing a quality workforce.

Higher levels of student achievement will result in a higher quality workforce. To accomplish this end, a stronger relationship is needed between education and the economy, and education must be more clearly aligned with current and future economic opportunities. At the elementary and secondary level, this means that the education system ensures that the opportunities available to all students provide them with maximum options to succeed by preparing them for work or further education and training. At the community college level, this responsibility involves providing traditional technical education preparation programs, as well as serving as the primary provider of training and retraining to Iowa's adults.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- Strong career planning and guidance programs, integrated curricula, coordinated secondary and postsecondary vocational/technical education and a system of career options are needed to provide all students with opportunities to succeed in work that leads to and sustains productive adulthood. The State Board and the Department will provide leadership to this effort by developing a vision for an integrated system of workforce education and by ensuring that state and federal resources and initiatives such as the Career Pathways and Tech Prep programs support this vision.

- Through innovative programs such as the Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Act and the Workforce

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Investment Fund, Iowa's community college system provides comprehensive training and retraining for future, current and dislocated workers. The State Board and the Department will assist the community college system in strengthening coordination and articulation among the colleges and with the elementary-secondary education system, the business community and other state agencies with a role in Iowa's workforce development agenda.

- To ensure that opportunities for economic productivity are available to all Iowans, the Department will lead efforts to adequately prepare members of ethnic minority groups and recruit them into the technical workforce and ensure that women have access to nontraditional occupations. In addition, these efforts must ensure that youth and adults with special learning needs have opportunities to succeed through programs such as English as a second language, developmental education and appropriate special education.

- Collaboration is the key to a successful workforce development system. At the state level, the Department will forge partnerships among state agencies to develop and implement a common agenda and will also assist in strengthening regional relationships among AEAs, community colleges and workforce development boards. The State Board has identified collaboration as a primary method of providing leadership and advocacy for the education system. It will be meeting with representatives from other state agencies, AEA governing boards and community college trustees to determine strategies for collaborating with other organizations in policy areas of mutual interest.

- The Department will support the integration of entrepreneurship theory and practice into school curricula and the role of the community colleges in small business education and incubator programs and will encourage the private sector to provide funding for entrepreneurship education.

- The ensure that all Iowans have the opportunity to succeed in the workplace, the Board and the Department will focus on helping community colleges strengthen special needs and developmental programs and services for the general adult population, for students making the transition from special education and for individuals who need access to training as part of welfare reform.

Strategy 3. The State Board and the Department of Education will support quality educator preparation and professional development programs designed to give educators the skills they need to improve teaching and learning.

Highly competent educators are essential for implementing school improvement plans and improving instruction. The State Board and the Department will support quality educator preparation programs and ongoing professional development opportunities, and will seek incentives to deal with shortage areas and to encourage diversity in order to assure access to a well-prepared and diverse educational workforce.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The State Board and the Department will continue to work with Iowa's educator preparation programs to develop programs that require teachers and administrators to demonstrate the critical proficiencies necessary for successful teaching and educational leadership in school districts, area education agencies and community colleges. The State Board's approval of these preparation programs will depend on the ability of the programs to assure that their graduates can demonstrate these skills as outlined in the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium principles. Concurrently, the Board of Educational Examiners has been revising the rules for practitioner licensure based on the candidates' ability to successfully demonstrate these same proficiencies.

- The State Board of Education will explore innovative strategies for improving educator preparation programs with the Board of Regents.

- The Department will work with area education agencies, community colleges, colleges and universities to provide teachers with new instructional and classroom management skills and administrators with leadership skills. The AEA/DE Collaborative and the Design Team will support this effort.

- The Department, through the AEA/DE Collaborative, the Design Team and other resources such as Star Schools funding, will assist with the development and coordination of teacher training and ongoing professional development opportunities in the area of instructional technology.

- In order to deal with some of the teacher and support personnel shortages in Iowa, the State Board and

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the Department will develop a proposal for an incentive program designed to encourage Iowa students to enter programs in critical shortage areas.

- The Department will develop a proposal for an incentive program designed to encourage gender and racial diversity of teachers, counselors and administrators in Iowa school districts and community colleges. This will allow students, regardless of their race, gender, or national origin, to have role models and benefit from seeing persons both like and unlike themselves at all levels of employment in the school or college.

- The Department will work with teacher preparation programs to develop at least one professional development school. This is a partnership between a university school of education and neighboring public school systems whereby faculty is shared with the goal of improving the quality of education both in the school districts and in the university program. This approach, which is not unlike the clinical practices model of a university teaching hospital, provides hands-on experience for student teachers, ongoing professional development for veteran teachers and clinical experience for university professors.

Strategy 4. Assistance and support will be provided for the continuous improvement of the basic operations of school districts and community colleges.

Iowa has a history of educational excellence that forms a solid base for improvements that will serve the state well into the 21st century. Attaining even higher levels of educational achievement can only be accomplished if this solid foundation for student achievement is maintained. Therefore, the Department and the State Board are committed to providing the support and assistance needed for the continuous improvement of the basic operations of school districts and community colleges.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The Department will continue to support the administrative functions of school districts, AEAs and community colleges, including financial management, accounting, information management, facilities, transportation and school food services. In addition, the Department will continuously improve support for its own activities and functions.

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- The Department will continue to provide support to federally funded programs and will work to align federal programs and resources so they support local education priorities.

- The Department will continue to provide support in programmatic areas such as curriculum and assessment. The Department will assist local and regional entities identify their needs in these areas of school improvement and will connect them with available resources.

- The Department will provide support for programs for at-risk students including the homeless, students who require special education, students for whom English is a second language, nontraditional students and displaced homemakers. The Department and the State Board will continue to advocate for early childhood programs, family resource programs and school-based youth services programs, which pull together resources to support children and families. They will advocate for the support programs such as school guidance and school health that make it possible for students to focus on learning and achievement.

- The Department will continue to provide the operational support necessary for strong community college programs that provide opportunities for life-long learning and economic growth in local communities.

Support Goal B: To coordinate the educational support system so it is focused on helping schools and communities meet their local goals.

Local schools and community colleges do not operate in isolation, nor do they have all of the resources they need to accomplish their missions. Organized support from other sectors of the system is essential if student achievement is to increase. A major source of support for Iowa schools is well established. Over 25 years ago Iowa created a system of regional agencies to give direct support services to the state's schools, educators and students. These area education agencies (AEAs) help schools with special education, educational media and instructional program development. Since its inception, the AEA system has significantly increased the equity of resources available to Iowa's schools. Because of the regional structure of the system, however, priorities have varied from AEA to AEA, and statewide planning and coordination involving all these agencies have been limited. Increased coordination of their programs and services would greatly increase the ability of the AEAs to help schools meet their student achievement goals.

Special programs funded by the state and federal governments have long been a valuable resource for Iowa's schools. Because these programs are for specific educational purposes, however, schools have been required to follow strict guidelines in operating the programs and spending the funds. Greater flexibility, with accountability, would allow schools to coordinate these programs, use the funds efficiently and focus on increased achievement for all students.

Throughout the educational system and the community at large are numerous resources, many of them untapped by most schools. Parents, community organizations, state and federal agencies, business, industry and labor, and higher education — all share the schools' goals. All are potential partners in the work of the schools. Most simply need to be asked.

Maximizing the existing support system and the resources available to schools is a complex task involving numerous participants. Among the challenges for the participants are developing shared goals, defining respective roles and responsibilities, coordinating programs and services and communicating effectively with each other. The results will be worth the effort — more effective schools and higher achieving students.

Strategies and Activities

Strategy 5. The State Board and the Department of Education will forge a clear partnership and strong common direction with the state's 15 area education agencies.

As the State Board and the Department of Education increase their focus on school improvement, they are working with the state's 15 area education agencies to improve support to school districts. The State Board, the Department and the AEAs seek to enhance educational programs and opportunities for all students by providing support to districts in their school improvement program efforts.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The State Board of Education and the AEA Governing Board will meet jointly to discuss issues and develop strategies for strengthening support for local school districts.

- The Area Education Agency and Department of Education Collaborative (AEA/DE Collaborative) has been formed to increase the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the services each agency provides to local districts. Recommendations about the core services to be offered by each area education agency will be developed by this Collaborative. Initial dis-

cussions about core services have focused on support for school/community planning processes and helping schools improve mathematics, science and communication skills instruction, including the utilization of technology and assessment in these areas.

- The Department and the State Board of Education, in conjunction with area education agencies, will develop standards and adopt rules for the accreditation of area education agencies. They will be general in nature, but will identify requirements for the services provided and indicators of quality that will permit assessment of the effectiveness of those services.

- State Board approval of AEA budgets will be tied to the accreditation standards and the provision of core services that have been identified by the AEA/DE Collaborative.

- The Department will support strengthening the relationships between AEAs and community colleges to improve the coordination and availability of resources at the regional level.

Strategy 6. The Department of Education will align state and federal programs and funding sources so that they can be used to support local school improvement efforts.

To a large degree, various state and federal programs have operated separately within the school setting. It is the intent of this strategy to help districts see the relationship of state and federal programs and funding sources to the school improvement process, to increased student achievement and to systemic change. This strategy is designed to encourage comprehensive planning and to position state and federal programs and funding sources so they can be used as a resource to support implementation of local school improvement plans. This strategy is also designed to improve efficiency and may save a significant amount of plan-development time at the local level.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The Department is simplifying state and federal plan requirements so that a district develops one comprehensive school improvement plan for achieving locally established student achievement goals rather than a number of unrelated or loosely related plans. Programs such as Phase III, the school improvement/technology program, special education, workforce development funding and Title I are incorporated into

this comprehensive school improvement plan and become resources for achieving locally established goals. Programs for at-risk students, programs for gifted students, early childhood education, adult developmental education, dislocated worker programs and vocational rehabilitation can be expanded through such alignment and integration.

- The Department will provide leadership, models and technical assistance on utilizing state and federal resources to support school improvement efforts. One model developed by the Department allows districts to fill out a single application to apply for School-to-Work, Career Pathways or Goals 2000 funding. This common grant application allows districts to relate these funding sources to their local goals. The state's School-to-Work implementation grant, for example, supports school improvement by making resources available to schools to forge partnerships with employers, labor, higher education and other education institutions.

- Another effort for aligning state and federal programs is Iowa's Consolidated State Plan, which provides a framework for the coordination of school reform efforts within Iowa schools. It facilitates a more clearly focused approach for comprehensive district planning, avoids duplication and fragmentation, and increases opportunities that will enable all children to meet locally developed high standards.

- The State Board has adopted guiding principles for responding to proposed federal legislation. Using these principles, the State Board will reinforce the strong tradition of local control of education in Iowa.

Strategy 7. The State Board and the Department will advocate for strong community partnerships and linkages among schools, parents, community members, businesses and other institutions.

The State Board and the Department will develop linkages by reaching out to parents, community members, businesses and other institutions that serve children, youth and the community and engage them as partners. Schools alone cannot ensure that every child will reach high standards. It is the intent of this strategy to build the strong community partnerships that are necessary to provide integrated education systems and comprehensive support for all children so that good teaching and learning can take place. It is also the intent of this strategy to support the

linkages among community colleges, businesses, local schools and communities that strengthen our economy.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The Department, in conjunction with the AEAs, will continue The Parent Educator Connection, a program designed to build strong working relationships between parents and schools. This program emphasizes the importance of good communication and mutual respect. While used primarily in special education at this time, this program is a model that would benefit all education.

- Strategies to involve parents in planning and implementing programs will be included as part of the school/community planning component of the school improvement process. Strategies for involving parents directly in the teaching and learning process and in positive youth asset development will also be included.

- In conjunction with other state agencies such as the Departments of Health, Human Services, Workforce Development and Economic Development, the Department of Education will provide models for collaborative community planning and implementation of programs to support children, families and adult learners. Current examples of this collaborative planning include the Child Development Coordinating Council, family resource centers, school-based youth services programs, the Head Start Collaboration Project, the Early Childhood Care Congress, School-to-Work, Regional Workforce Development Centers and adult literacy programs.

- The Department and the State Board will continue to support community education and community service learning and will initiate a proposal designed to utilize older Iowans and their expertise as a valuable resource in Iowa's schools.

- The State Board and the Department will support the role of community colleges as providers of specialized training and retraining in the current and emerging workforce development system. Strong linkages between community colleges and business and industry will facilitate developing alliances between school districts and local employers.

- The Department will facilitate the coordination of community college services and strengthen their ability to function as a statewide system.

Support Goal C: To provide collaborative state-level leadership and support for Iowa education in order to create system-wide improvement and increased student achievement.

System-wide improvement of education will not simply happen. Leadership will make those changes happen — leadership at the local and regional levels and leadership at the state level.

The most important role of state-level leadership is to ensure that students learn by clarifying the system's needs, targeting resources and tracking progress. Another important role is to provide services and resources to assist the work of local schools, area education agencies and community colleges. State-level leadership is also responsible for the support system coordination and improvements that will increase local capacity and result in higher student achievement.

State-level leaders are found in the executive and legislative branches of government, in education organizations, higher education, business, industry and labor. By working together, leaders in these fields can create needed changes through a shared vision, communication, coordination, policy making, resource development and accountability.

The conditions for change will be created when Iowans share a vision for the eduction system and understand the challenges the state's students will face in the future. State leaders must share such a vision and communicate it to their constituents. Coordination and partnerships among state-level leaders are important related strategies, as are other partnerships with the public and private sectors designed to bring about improvement in the system.

A particularly significant role for leadership is to make a convincing case that public education is an investment in the economic stability of Iowa and the quality of life for its citizens. All levels of the education system need adequate resources. State-level leadership requires financial and human resources in order to provide the direction, support, programs and services the system needs. If they are to meet the needs of students, Iowa's schools, area education agencies and community colleges need adequate funding, staff, materials, equipment and facilities. Strong leadership at the state level is essential to ensure adequate and equitable funding for early childhood, elementary and secondary education, area education agencies and community colleges.

All levels of the education system need accurate and timely data and information as the basis for decision making. This is particularly true at the state level, where far-reaching policies, rules and laws are formulated to support the system's goals. The collection, analysis, use and reporting of state-wide data on the system, from pre-kindergarten through community college, need improvements. These include re-engineering and automation of data collection and development of electronic means of disseminating it for use at all levels.

Accountability within the education system is a vital function of its leadership. Strengthening or creating accreditation for schools, school districts, area education agencies and community colleges is needed. Also needed are improved methods of measuring and reporting results and feedback from multiple constituencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the system.

Strategies and Activities

Strategy 8. The State Board and the Department will effectively communicate the needs of the education system and the Department will develop the information systems needed for quality planning, policy development, decision making and accountability.

Effective and timely communication is essential to creating an education system that will serve the state well into the 21st Century. It is through communication that the needs of the future workplace are identified, the partnerships are built to accomplish goals and effectiveness is assessed. Good decisions require the effective use of adequate information. The Department will provide timely access to the information needed to support continuous improvement at all levels of the educational system. This will be done through the development of a management information system designed to provide data and information at the preK-12 and community college levels for local strategic planning, policy development and decision making. At the state level it will provide information for system-wide policy development, research, evaluation and accountability.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The Department is re-engineering data collection through Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and designing access systems through data warehousing. The Department, AEAs and many local districts have maintained rich data bases of information about students, personnel, programs and finances. However, many of these data bases are burdensome, paper intensive, difficult to access and not well related to other data bases. EDI will automate the collection of information for both school districts and community colleges and will increase the quantity, quality and utility of the information.

- The Department will provide for training in the effective use of data and information for planning and decision-making at the local level.

- The Department is working with school districts, AEAs, software vendors and service providers to pi-

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lot the electronic exchange of financial information among the districts, the AEAs and the Department. This system will include a provision for feedback regarding significant financial information.

- The developing management information system for community colleges will link to other information systems, such as the one being developed for workforce development. The State Board and the Department will play a leadership role in ensuring that local and state staff possess the skills and knowledge necessary to collect, analyze, use and report the data and information available through a management information system.

- The Department is working with Iowa school districts to pilot the electronic exchange of appropriate student information, such as transcripts, among the districts, the Department and institutions of higher education. Through this project, called EASIER (Electronic Access System for Iowa Education Records), the Department will establish standards for an electronic system to collect, store and access information about education. Included in this system will be standards to ensure the usefulness of the information as well as provide for a secure and efficient system.

- A major role of the State Board is setting direction and advocating for the educational system. The State Board will utilize the improved information that is available as a result of these information systems as they set policy and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

- The Department and the State Board will provide ongoing information regarding legal matters related to education and will fulfill their leadership and statutory role of hearing appeals to the State Board and Director, promulgating administrative rules, making legislative recommendations and providing legislative support.

- The State Board and the Department will continuously improve their communications with schools, AEAs, community colleges and the public. A specific emphasis will be placed on seeking customer feedback, which is essential to continuous improvement.

Strategy 9. The State Board and the Department will advocate for adequate and equitable funding for education.

The State Board and the Department will provide leadership related to funding for preK-12 and community college education and the area education agencies. They will advocate for funding systems at both the preK-12 and community college levels that are equitable, flexible and predictable and that support local control. They will also advocate for funding that is adequate to support a comprehensive education system and a support system that result in improved learning for all students.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The current school funding formula for the K-12 system expires July 1, 2001. The Department of Education will play a key role in providing the information and analyzing the data to determine the effectiveness of the current school finance system and making recommendations for its revision or modification.

- One emerging issue that needs particular attention is funding for special education and at-risk programs. A task force has been formed by the Director of the Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan and make recommendations to deal with special education and at-risk program and funding issues.

- The Department will study the funding needs of the community colleges and will develop recommendations for a funding structure designed to support the mission of the community college system and of individual institutions. Providing adequate state level support so that tuition rates can be kept at an affordable level is of primary concern.

- The State Board has gone on record supporting a comprehensive system of early childhood education. The State Board and the Department will continue to advocate for adequate funding to support early childhood education.

Strategy 10. The State Board and the Department will implement procedures to ensure accountability, while allowing for maximum local flexibility.

In order to allow schools and communities the greatest latitude in identifying their local expectations for students and achieving those in their own way, the Department will allow maximum regu-

latory flexibility while implementing statewide procedures to ensure accountability. These procedures will focus on continuous improvement and expanding the current indicator system so that it provides broad-based information about system effectiveness in improving academic achievement.

Activities to implement this strategy:

- The State Board and the Department are changing the emphasis of their accreditation process from one of compliance with minimum standards to a focus on continuous improvement. Monitoring of schools and districts for compliance with accreditation standards will continue, however, more emphasis will be placed on providing support to districts in their school improvement efforts. The new accreditation process for area education agencies will identify requirements for the services to be provided by each division and will include indicators of quality to assess the effectiveness of AEA services. The accreditation process for community colleges is designed to improve the effectiveness of the system as well as individual institutions. Finally, special education compliance monitoring is being re-engineered to go beyond procedural compliance and provide for a substantive review of the results of the system.

- The Department will continue to improve and expand the information in the *Condition of Education Report* so that local districts and community colleges can use it as the basis of an indicator system to measure their own progress. The *Condition of Education Report* currently provides descriptive data about students, staff, programs and funding. It will be expanded to provide additional information about system effectiveness as it relates to academic achievement and customer satisfaction with education services. As information becomes available, it will be reported by gender and race/ethnicity and eventually by socio-economic status.

Part II - Indicators of Success

Goals become more meaningful when there is evidence of progress towards achieving them. In Iowa, specific student achievement goals are set at the local level. Assessment is also done locally with progress reported back to the community. This assessment information is most beneficial when it is used at the classroom or district level to improve instruction and curriculum, to set local policy or to allocate resources and, thereby, improve learning. This assessment data helps dis-

tricts and classroom teachers make good curriculum and instruction decisions.

A goal of the State Board and the Department of Education is to document continuous improvement in student learning across the state and over time. Another goal is to provide benchmark information so that local districts or community colleges can compare themselves to what is happening on a statewide basis. This can be particularly helpful if the data is reported by gender, race/ethnicity, subject area and grade level. A district or college can then compare its own data to state-level information. This helps identify problems specifically enough to design and implement a solution. Information collected at the state level supports system-wide decision making and state policy development and enables state education decision makers to determine the best use of limited resources to improve student learning.

Currently, standardized tests given voluntarily by school districts and college entrance exams are used as primary state-wide indicators of student achievement. In addition to the information available from these standardized tests, however, a quality assessment system involves multiple measures of student performance. Methods such as student writing samples, portfolios, performance assessments, learning demonstrated in an applied setting, job placements, job performance and employer satisfaction are additional indicators that provide a more comprehensive picture of student success and the effectiveness of instructional programs.

Full and meaningful assessment of student achievement is a process that continues to evolve. Whether designing multi-faceted methods that adequately measure what students know and can do, reporting data in a manner that is consistent and useful, or using that information to drive decisions about curriculum, instruction, educational policy and resource allocation, this is an area that is clearly developing. As part of this evolutionary process, it is necessary to focus initially on a few indicators, to develop a baseline of data in those areas to allow for annual comparisons and then to target additional indicator areas for expansion.

It is the intent of the Department and the State Board to develop a state indicator system that will model some of the data points that local districts and community colleges might choose to use and to offer a template for collecting such information at the local level. The State Board and the Department of Education will use statewide performance indicators to measure progress toward achieving the goals in this strategic plan. Examples of the types of indicators follow.

EDUCATION SYSTEM GOAL: TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF LEARNING, ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF ALL STUDENTS SO THEY WILL BECOME SUCCESSFUL MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND THE WORKFORCE.

- Percent of local districts and community colleges that

collect and report data on school success by gender, race/ethnicity and socio-economic status.

- Increased student achievement on various standardized measures among all subgroups.
- Percent of schools, school districts and community colleges that have performance standards.
- High school dropout rates.
- Percent of students completing a core program of four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics, science and social studies courses.
- Number of students completing higher level mathematics and science courses.
- Percent of high school students entering different forms of postsecondary education programs.
- Percent of districts that participate in the Positive Youth Development survey and the percent that collect and report information on positive youth assets, such as involvement in community activities.
- Job placement, wage rates.
- Employer satisfaction data.
- Number of at-risk four-year-olds served by appropriate programs.
- Number of students served by all-day, every-day kindergarten.

SUPPORT GOAL A: TO HELP SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES OBTAIN THE TRAINING AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO MEET THE LEARNING NEEDS OF ALL THEIR CHILDREN AND ADULTS.

- Percent of teachers and administrators who report that they are able to obtain training and assistance needed for improving their knowledge and skills to help students achieve at high levels.
- Extent of racial and gender diversity among K-12 and community college teachers and administrators.
- Local district self-report on their status in the school improvement process including:

- establishing effective parent and community involvement
- setting high standards for students
- providing for adequate professional development opportunities
- assessing progress toward local goals
- reporting progress to the community.

- Percent of educator preparation programs that recommend students for licensure based on demonstration of Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) skills.

SUPPORT GOAL B. TO COORDINATE THE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM SO IT IS FOCUSED ON HELPING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES MEET THEIR LOCAL GOALS.

- Implementation of the AEA accreditation process.
- Degree to which State Board approval of AEA budgets is contingent on core services/accreditation standards.
- Number of state and federal programs the Department has been able to align to support local goals.
- Anecdotal information about effective partnerships.
- Number of school districts applying for consolidated federal and state funding to support school improvement.

SUPPORT GOAL C. TO PROVIDE COLLABORATIVE STATE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR IOWA EDUCATION IN ORDER TO CREATE SYSTEM-WIDE IMPROVEMENT AND INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

- Percent of districts and community colleges with electronic student records systems.
- Percent of districts and community colleges submitting data to the Department electronically.
- Percent of districts and colleges without financial condition concerns identified by independent auditors.
- Survey of school districts, AEAs and community colleges to determine Department effectiveness.
- State Board self-assessment completed annually.